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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

Research Memorandum
RSB-185, November 17, 1962

EXCISE

TO : The Secretary
THROUGH: S/S
FROM : INR - Roger Hilsman

Roger Hilsman

SUBJECT: Negotiations on Cuba: the Advantages of Stalemate

We have analyzed recent Soviet diplomatic overtures and Moscow's propaganda linking a Cuban settlement with prospects for negotiations in other fields.

CONCLUSIONS

We conclude that a stalemate in the Cuban talks might actually be more beneficial to US interests in Latin America, in Cuba and in broader negotiations with the USSR than a settlement.

The US would preserve its freedom for future action to force the downfall of Castro and the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Latin America if a suitable opportunity presents itself.

(2) Continued Soviet presence in Cuba would be made as difficult as possible and relatively useless. Eventually, Moscow might even question the value of remaining in Cuba under such circumstances, though that result cannot be clearly foreseen at this time.

(3) There would be an incentive for the Soviet Union to engage in productive negotiations on other issues, because the Soviet Union may wish to create a political climate which would impede further US action against Cuba.

Soviet Motives in Cuba

In emphasizing peaceful coexistence, the possibility of an East-West detente, and the improving climate for negotiations, Moscow appears to be pursuing two separate sets of objectives.

In the immediate future the Soviets hope to secure an optimum settlement on Cuba. The Soviet Union has now made clear the outlines of what it wishes to achieve in a Cuban settlement.

— It hopes to create a political climate in which the US has no possible justification for further action against Cuba.

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-- It clearly wishes to drive the best bargain it can get on US assurances to the Castro regime. And no matter how qualified the non-invasion assurance it finally obtained might be, the Soviet Union would attempt to interpret it in a fashion calculated to create a presumption that the US was acting in bad faith if any untoward events occurred in Cuba.

-- It seeks to reduce to an absolute minimum, and would wish to avoid entirely if it could, any provision for on-site inspection or continuing US presence in Cuba.

-- It intends to maintain a presence in Cuba, and would prefer to maintain a military presence there.

-- However, Moscow is apparently willing to trade off at least some elements of its actual or potential military presence (the IL-28s, for example) if it can thereby end the quarantine, minimize verification and maximize the acceptance of the Castro regime.

The Soviet Union almost certainly expects Castro to be disgruntled at the conclusion of the crisis. The Soviets probably estimate that even the most favorable terms which they can hope to obtain from the US will not leave the Cubans content, and Castro will continue to feel that he has been sold out by the Soviets. But the Soviets probably also calculate that their best chance for improving relations with Castro is to obtain a negotiated settlement with the US. If the Soviets can assure the safety of the Castro regime, they probably believe that they can in time use economic aid and political support to re-establish satisfactory rapport with the Cubans.

At the same time the Soviet Union will have succeeded in preserving a communist regime in Latin America as a foothold and as an example to other potential communist regimes. If the Soviet Union can thus assure Cuban security, it will do much to offset the damage to Soviet prestige involved in the missile withdrawal. The Soviets probably reckon that bloc critics would have less cause for thinking the USSR had been defeated if it could demonstrate that retreat was a sound tactic for preserving a communist foothold in Latin America.

Soviet Objectives in Other Negotiations

More broadly, the Soviets appear to be interested in using a Cuban settlement as a starting point from which to pursue other objectives vis-à-vis the West. These broader objectives are far less clearly visible than Soviet goals for a Cuban settlement; they may, in fact, still be under review in Moscow.

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For the moment the Soviet Union has advanced only two more or less concrete negotiating proposals, on the temporary presence of Western troops in West Berlin under a UN flag and on the use of "black boxes" to monitor a test-ban. These proposals had evidently been planned for some time prior to the Cuban crisis.

Moscow's present emphasis on the possibility of negotiated settlements could be nothing more than a tactical ruse to lure the US into a more favorable Cuban settlement. At the other extreme Moscow could conceivably have radically altered its view of the world in the three weeks since it decided that it would have to withdraw its missiles from Cuba; the Soviets may have concluded that given their strategic inferiority and the grim prospect of an endless and economically debilitating arms race, the time has come for a far-reaching settlement of outstanding issues such as Berlin and a start on general disarmament.

While neither of these extreme possibilities can be entirely ruled out on the basis of the evidence presently at hand, both appear improbable. On a balance, past Soviet performance and the few indications of Soviet intentions that we have, point to an effort to engage the US in negotiations on a series of topics both for the sake of the atmospheric gains to be derived from the negotiating process itself and in the hope of obtaining some agreements on acceptable terms. While Moscow appears willing to make some initial concession in order to get negotiations started, there is as yet little indication of how far the Soviets may be willing to go in order to secure agreements.

Negotiated Settlement

Broadly speaking there are two principal alternatives by which the present negotiations in New York may be concluded -- either a negotiated agreement or a stalemate in the talks.^{1/}

A negotiated settlement of the Cuban crisis would provide the Soviet Union with much or all that it could hope to achieve in Cuba under present circumstances.

1. We omit as infeasible under present circumstances a US invasion of Cuba. Obviously, in case of invasion the USSR would have to withdraw from meaningful negotiations with the US for a protracted period of time.

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Initially Castro's dissatisfaction would be maximized. He would regard any Soviet concessions in the negotiations as selling out his interests to the US.

But the Castro regime would be substantially safeguarded from invasion, and by implication, at least, from other US actions against it. Soviet presence in Cuba, as a donor of economic assistance, a sponsor of subversive activities elsewhere in the hemisphere, and probably as a military protector as well would be assured. The cause of Castro's dissatisfactions would be a single event which would tend to be obscured by subsequent developments, and with time Castro would have little choice but to reconcile himself to the status quo.

Communist China would doubtless support and encourage Castro in any charges of Soviet duplicity and disloyalty to principles of international communism. But as Castro's relations with Moscow improved, there would be less opportunity for Peiping to attempt to manipulate Soviet-Cuban differences for the purpose of attacking Soviet policies. Similarly, Peiping's ability to play up Moscow's withdrawal of its missiles as a defeat for Soviet policy would be reduced as the demonstrable fact of continued communist presence in Latin America gradually overshadowed the withdrawal itself.

Moscow would be free to use the Cuban settlement as a point of departure for other negotiations, but once they had gotten what they could in Cuba, the Soviet Union would feel little need to make concessions to the US on other issues. For the sake of Cuba,
"Peace-peace"

The other major alternative would be to leave the Cuban crisis unresolved. Since the US is not likely to obtain its maximum demands for on-site inspection and continuing UN presence in Cuba, it could refuse to issue a non-invasion guarantee. Depending on whether or not the IL-28s were removed, the US might lift or maintain the quarantine on offensive weapons. Aerial surveillance would of course continue. The US would neither take immediate action to upset the status quo to which Moscow's prestige is heavily committed, nor

1. The US would be spared the problems which a guarantee for Castro would create for US policy in Latin America. No matter how carefully it was worded, a guarantee for Castro would be regarded by many Latin American governments as a recognition of the legitimacy of the Castro regime and as a tacit acceptance of communism in Latin America.

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would it commit itself to the preservation of the Castro regime and the Soviet presence in Cuba. In effect, the present crisis with the possibility of further US action against Cuba would be perpetuated. The talks in New York would soon be obviously futile and would probably be allowed to peter out.

Effect on the Soviet Position in Cuba

There would be little immediate effect on the Soviet position in Cuba. While the Soviets would almost certainly prefer the advantages of a clear-cut settlement and some form of explicit US commitment to Cuba's safety the basic Soviet interest in maintaining a presence in Cuba would not at the outset be affected. There might well be no occasion for a dramatic response on Moscow's part as the New York talks drifted into a stalemate, and the US took no direct action to upset the status quo.

This approach would not be calculated either to force the Soviets out of Cuba or to bring down the Castro regime. [For the present, little short of invasion, the disappearance of Castro himself, or a major split in the Cuban ruling combination could be counted on to have that effect. For a discussion of the prospects of such a split see Research Memorandum RAR-45 which is a companion piece to this report. However, the US would be free to maintain as its ultimate goal the downfall of Castro and the end of the Soviet presence in Latin America, and would in the future be free to take whatever action it might find desirable.]

As time went on the Soviet presence in Cuba would be made more expensive and difficult. Castro would have less immediate cause for dissatisfaction than he would under a negotiated agreement, but the sources of his discontent would remain, and over the long run Cuban-Soviet tensions would be reinforced.

Failure to obtain a guarantee of Cuba's security from the US would tend to encourage Soviet-Cuban differences over policy toward the US and the degree of Moscow's commitment to the defense of Cuba. Precisely because the future was uncertain, Cuba would seek more assurance from Moscow while the Soviets would be chary of extending commitments which they might be reluctant to fulfill.

Continuation of US surveillance, and the quarantine if maintained, would be another source of Soviet-Cuban differences. Castro would doubtless demand action which the Soviet Union was unwilling to take. The continuation of overflights and the quarantine would of course subject the US to a risk of incidents. These activities would however, provide a higher degree of assurance that Soviet offensive weapons were not reintroduced than would be afforded by any foreseeable agreement, and they could by

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